

Kentucky adapts national media campaign to influence tweens' physical activity

Background

Overview. Kentucky received funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2003 for obesity prevention activities through the Nutrition and Physical Activity Program to Prevent Obesity and Other Chronic Diseases cooperative agreement. The proposal included funding for the Lexington-Fayette County Health Department (LFCHD) to implement a program targeting behavior



change in tweens (children aged 9–13) using a model called community-based prevention marketing. Community-based prevention marketing merges coalition/community planning with the social marketing process.¹ This model was developed by the Florida Prevention Research Center (FPRC). One of its staff members took a sabbatical to work with the county health department and implement this program.

The county organized a coalition of more than 40 community members to target tweens with several broad behavior change goals. One of these goals was to increase physical activity in the community. The coalition decided to tailor VERB™ (CDC's national physical activity campaign targeted to tweens) to the Lexington community. This case describes how

Kentucky recruited coalition members, identified a target audience, chose target behaviors, conducted formative research on local tweens, tailored VERB to the Lexington community, and evaluated the pilot program.

Apply It: Use concepts from social marketing to recruit people for a committee or coalition. Remember, these individuals are an audience too, and think about what benefits and barriers they might have to participating in your coalition.

Coalition Recruitment. LFCHD staff identified community leaders who might be interested in serving on a coalition. These leaders were recruited with a letter that detailed the benefits of participating in the coalition. The LFCHD employee leading the coalition called all of the potential members to find out what might motivate them or keep them from joining the coalition. A common concern was that coalitions tended to be a lot of talk and not much action. The LFCHD team addressed this concern by conducting a couple of events fairly quickly to keep coalition members energized. Volunteers from many different facets

¹Community-based prevention marketing is described in: Bryant CA, Forthofer MS, McCormack Brown K, McDermott RJ. Community-based prevention marketing. *Social Marketing Quarterly*. 1999;5(3):54-59.

of the community made up the final coalition, among them parents, business owners, churches, schools, and nonprofit organizations.

Training in Social Marketing. Once the coalition was formed, the FPRC staff member explained the social marketing process. She began each meeting by teaching about a particular component of the process. This topic correlated with a decision that the coalition needed to make that day. In this way, members could immediately apply what they had just learned to a decision. For example, at one meeting, participants heard a presentation on the need for segmenting an audience and methods to do so. Then they chose an audience segment for their intervention. This type of meeting was scheduled for the beginning stages of the planning process.

The coalition members combined the information presented to them with their per-

sonal knowledge of the community to make decisions about the best strategies to use.

To supplement the presentations, the FPRC hosted a 2-day workshop in social marketing for any interested coalition member in January 2004.

Describe the Problem

Problem Description. The FPRC staff member presented a review of the literature on obesity prevention in the tween age group to coalition members at one of their first meetings. She also presented the current research on tweens that had been done by commercial marketers and information gathered for the VERB campaign. County health department employees collected data on local obesity rates. The coalition used all of this information to further understand its target audience, and thus was able to make more informed decisions

Lexington's Timeline	
October 2003	Coalition Meeting – Overview of social marketing
November 2003	Coalition Meeting – Current market research on tweens by commercial marketers
December 2003	Coalition Meeting – Promising strategies in obesity prevention
January 2004	One-day retreat to work on subcommittees Two-day workshop in social marketing, by FPRC
February 2004	Coalition Meeting – Presentation by VERB campaign project director Decision to use VERB materials
May 2004	Launch of VERB Summer Scorecard program
Fall 2004	Evaluation of the 2004 Summer Scorecard program
Summer 2004	Launch of 2005 VERB Summer Scorecard program

about intervention strategies. The information eventually was used to create *Promoting Physical Activity in Community Settings: A Strategy Formation Workbook for the Lexington Tweens Nutrition and Fitness Coalition*², which describes the tween audience and marketing strategies in detail.

Potential Target Audiences. The LFCHD employees chose an initial broad target audience of tweens before the coalition was

formed, because they wanted to take advantage of the market research on tweens that had been conducted for the VERB campaign. The health

department then focused its recruitment of coalition members on people who already worked closely with members of this broad target audience.

Audience Research and Initial Decisions. After the presentations on social marketing, national tween market research, and promising strategies for obesity prevention, the coalition members made some decisions. They picked several potential areas that could benefit from their intervention. In January 2004, the coalition met for a full-day retreat to further explore and refine these topics. The coalition decided on four main topic areas: physical activity in the community, physical activity in the schools, nutrition in the schools, and parent involvement. They broke into committees to address each topic separately. "Physical activity in the community" was chosen as the first prior-

ity, and the coalition planned to address the rest of the topics in later phases of their work.

At the next meeting, the coalition heard a presentation on VERB by the campaign's director. This presentation inspired the coalition to not only use VERB's research, but also capitalize on VERB's materials and events to address physical activity in the community. Coalition members selected physical activity in the community as their first priority because



they were able to use VERB's resources. The leadership team encouraged this decision so the coalition could stay motivated with some early accomplishments.

Because of the desire to move quickly, coalition members used the national formative research conducted by the VERB campaign and their knowledge of their local community to brainstorm ideas for a physical activity community intervention. Coalition members came up with the idea to do a scorecard or passport program so tweens could record their physical activity to win prizes. This type of program was a combination of two successful local programs: 1) a summer reading program that had been

Apply It: *If you know your broad target audience early in the planning process, then you can involve coalition members or partners that work closely with this audience from the very beginning.*

² Available online at: <http://hsc.usf.edu/publichealth/prc/physical+activity+community.pdf>.

offered by the Lexington Public Library System and 2) a passport program offered by various local arts and cultural agencies. Once the basic idea for an intervention was identified, the coalition conducted formative research to test the idea and to learn more about tweens in their local community. It was only after this formative research was conducted and the scorecard idea tested well that the coalition moved ahead with its plans.

Conduct Market/Formative Research

National Formative Research. National formative research included information on general characteristics of tweens, typical behaviors that they enjoy (i.e., that might compete with physical activity), and potential barriers to physical activity. VERB's events and messages were developed from this research, but the Lexington coalition knew that it needed to tailor its own messages and events specifically to local tweens. This decision required the coalition to conduct some of its own formative research. Most of this research was gathered through focus groups with both tweens and their parents.

Youth Board. One strategy the coalition used to keep the project focused on the target audience was to convene a youth advisory board. This board included local high school students who were recruited through their guidance counselors. The experience they gained from this project helped to satisfy community service requirements that some of them had to complete before graduation.

The high school students were chosen because they could inform decision makers about what would be "cool" to tweens. Tweens

often look up to older students, so by having older students participate and give advice, the program had a better chance at influencing the target age group.

The youth board members were old enough to help with implementing the scorecard program. They worked at program events and were even

able to sponsor their own events. Another responsibility given to the youth board was to conduct focus groups. The coalition believed that tweens were more likely to open up and give candid answers to student moderators than to adults, so they trained the youth board to either moderate or co-moderate the tween focus groups.

Not only were these skills useful to the program, but they also gave the youth board participants some experiences to use on college and scholarship applications.

The youth board members were paid for the time they spent in training and conducting formative research, but not for running programs or attending meetings.

Lesson Learned: *Kentucky suggests these tips for keeping a youth board happy: 1) recruit students from different schools, to avoid "cliques," 2) always provide food at meetings, 3) give them meaningful work and treat them like adults, and 4) help them understand their work is important and their ideas are respected.*

Saving Money: *Having high school students conduct focus groups instead of a research firm was economical. It also provided a way for the students to obtain useful skills and experience. The tradeoff was the time and effort required to train the students.*

Focus Group Development. The coalition conducted focus groups with tweens and their parents to explore their four main topic areas. The LFCHD focus group team (two permanent staff members, one graduate student, and one anthropology doctoral student) developed questions for the focus groups. Tweens and parents were recruited through paid ads in a local family magazine, posters, personal referrals, and through schools. Parents were offered a \$40 gift certificate to the local mall and tweens were offered a \$15 gift certificate to the mall. The health department had conducted focus groups with this age group in the past and had learned that mall gift certificates were well-received incentives.

Focus Groups. Tweens and their parents participated in separate focus groups. Parent groups were held at the same time and location (but in different rooms) as the groups for their children. The coalition conducted nine focus groups on the topic area

of physical activity in the community, and another nine focus groups to provide specific feedback on the scorecard/passport idea. This feedback was then incorporated into planning the program. Additional focus groups yielded information about the coalition's other priority areas.

Apply It: *If you use focus groups as part of your formative research, the number of groups you will need depends on the diversity of your participants and the complexity of your topic. Most states have found it useful to have between two and nine groups. It is important to understand the perspective of your audience. But once you start hearing the same things over and over, you have reached the point of saturation and the benefit of additional groups diminishes.*



Teenagers from the youth board moderated tween focus groups, although an adult (a member of the research team) was always present and observing. The groups that provided feedback on the Summer Scorecard program gave the coalition some ideas about the card itself and what tweens liked. For example, the tweens wanted a card that was small enough to fit in their wallets. They were interested in opportunities to socialize with their friends and wanted prizes that were worthwhile.

Two LFCHD employees moderated the parent focus groups. Parents stated that they often felt overwhelmed and busy. In focus groups about the Summer Scorecard program, parents said that they wanted events that were free; they also mentioned significant prizes.

Formative Research Analysis. The

research team (minus the graduate student) separately went through the focus group results, coded them, and entered them into a qualitative research software program. Staff

Apply It: *If you start with an existing intervention or national campaign, you should still do some formative research or pre-testing to make sure that it will be received well with your specific target audience. Based on the results, you should be willing to make changes in order to tailor it to your own target audience.*

wrote final reports to describe the results of the local focus groups and to incorporate them with the national research on tweens. The reports were presented to the coalition, which then used them

to make decisions about goals and develop marketing strategies for each of the priority topic areas.

Create the Intervention Strategy

Segmenting the Target Audience. The

coalition used information from the formative research already conducted by the VERB campaign to segment its target audience. This research found that meaningful segments for this behavior (physical activity) could be identified based on tweens' age, gender, or degree of involvement in activities outside the home.³ The coalition chose to focus its efforts on sixth graders (11–12 years old) for most of its activities. However, for the Summer Scorecard program, it followed VERB's guidelines and extended its efforts to tweens aged 9–13.

Tailoring a National Campaign. The

materials and images used in the Summer Scorecard program were based on VERB, but the scorecard concept was developed by the Lexington coalition. Tweens were given a scorecard with 24 squares on it.⁴ Every time they participated in physical activity at a sponsored site they could get their card stamped. The coalition worked with businesses and vendors to obtain special deals for participants. Parents could also initial up to half of the squares for physical activity at home.

Events were held throughout the summer to keep momentum going for the program. The coalition developed programming for one of VERB's promotions: the Longest Day of Play. Three coalition members planned three major events in the community for the Longest Day of Play, and other activities were offered at sites all over town all day long. More than 950 children participated in the activities for this particular event. Another event, the Grand Finale, took place at a local stadium.

More than 1,000 participants engaged in different activities, such as bowling, Frisbee golf, aerobics, and running. Twenty grand prize winners were selected

and could choose their own prizes. Children who completed a scorecard over the summer received a drawstring backpack with the VERB

Saving Money: *Kentucky saved money by using VERB because it didn't need to develop a new logo or new graphics. It was able to adapt VERB's materials to fit its own projects.*

³ For more information on the marketing strategy developed by the coalition and FPRC, see *Promoting Physical Activity in Community Settings: A Strategy Formation Workbook for the Lexington Tweens Nutrition and Fitness Coalition* at http://publichealth.usf.edu/prc/kentucky_obesity/index.html.

⁴ A description of Lexington's program and a sample of the scorecard can be found at: http://www.cdc.gov/youthcampaign/partners/spotlights/lexington_spotlight.htm.

logo that contained a flying disc, water bottle, and coupons from business partners to encourage them to continue being active after the program was over.

The Lexington coalition made decisions about the Summer Scorecard program by combining data from a national population with data from its local tween population. Many times these two sources gave consistent information, but some differences did emerge. For example, VERB recommended using radio ads to promote programs. However, the coalition found that local tweens ignored radio ads, so they were dropped after the first Summer Scorecard program. Local focus groups were useful because they queried tweens about their ideal spokespeople for programs (local students who looked like them), the role that family members play in physical activity, typical locations for physical activity, and desirable prizes to encourage program participation.

Benefits/Drawbacks to Using a National Campaign. Using a nationally recognized campaign (such as VERB) for a local program gave the program instant credibility and recognition. Because the Lexington coalition was using VERB's brand and materials, it had to follow a logo usage agreement that specified which messages could be used and in what circumstances. This forced the local team to be consistent with VERB's messages. An added benefit of using the VERB brand was that VERB had already tested materials and messages with tweens and had a high recognition rate. The coalition found that most tweens already understood what VERB was about, and did not need to be introduced

to a new brand. However, for those who did not understand VERB or were unfamiliar with it, the team had to explain both concepts—VERB and the Summer Scorecard program.

Evaluation

Evaluation of 2004 Scorecard Program.

The first Summer Scorecard program took place in the summer of 2004. More than 950 tweens participated in the Longest Day of Play event. Over the course of the summer program, tweens made more than 2,000 visits to scorecard partners. They turned in at least 355 completed scorecards at the Grand Finale event (and many more partially completed cards). Feedback from tweens and parents interviewed during the Grand Finale was very positive. All of the business partners that participated in the 2004 program agreed to participate in the 2005 Summer Scorecard event.

Program Changes for 2005. At the end of the summer, the coalition decided to continue it in 2005, so the Lexington team evaluated the first year to make improvements. The evaluation included observations of scorecard sites and interviews with participants and nonparticipants. The following were a few of the changes made to the program.

Tweens gave feedback that the advertisements and marketing used in the first year showed kids who were too young. They also said that they wanted to see local kids. In response, the coalition conducted auditions and picked five local youth (at the older end of the target age group) to be featured in all of the advertisements. This seemed to attract older tweens to the second scorecard program.

Parents had a few suggestions, as well. They wanted the scorecard to have a calendar so they could see what events were offered each day. The coalition developed a scorecard for the second summer that folded out to reveal a mini-calendar with all scorecard events listed. Parents also complained about the difficulty in getting their children to and from events. In response, for the 2005 scorecard, the health department teamed up with the local bus system to allow tweens to use their scorecard as a bus token. Also, the coalition changed the rules of the program to allow parents to initial all 24 scorecard squares (instead of just half) for physical activity at home.

Pre-testing Changes. To get feedback on the new scorecard from tweens and parents, the coalition took the card to after-school programs and libraries. Their findings led to some wording changes, but overall the new card was well received.

Evaluation. The University of Kentucky and the University of South Florida conducted additional evaluations following the 2005 Summer Scorecard program. They gathered both qualitative and quantitative data.

Qualitative data included face-to-face interviews conducted at the Grand Finale event with tweens who participated in the program and their parents, and interviews at local libraries and movie theaters with nonparticipants. These interviews yielded demographic data and information on physical activity behaviors. Another component of the qualitative evaluation was an open-ended telephone survey with a sample of parents of VERB Summer Scorecard participants on several

topics: scorecard design, program activities and events, promotion and advertisements, and physical activity behaviors. Follow-up surveys are also planned.

Approximately 1,000 people attended the 2005 Grand Finale event, turning in just over 800 completed scorecards. Approximately 65% of parents stated that their children were more active after participating in the VERB Summer Scorecard program. The same percentage of parents stated that they were more aware of their children's physical activity levels after the program. Forty percent of parents said that their children started new activities after the VERB Summer Scorecard program.

The evaluation team gathered some quantitative data from completed scorecards. The scorecards provided useful demographic data and information about how the participant found out about the program; however, not all of the cards had been completed. The LFCHD added several questions to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey about familiarity with VERB and behavior changes.

Next Steps

Kentucky has used the example set by Lexington to adapt Summer Scorecard-type programs to other areas. Lexington is considering developing a year-round VERB scorecard program that can be sustained by the community. This program could also be replicated in other communities. Like the Summer Scorecard, it would involve discounts and coupons from local vendors and be distributed through the schools.

Kentucky's Intervention Planning at a Glance	
Behavior Change Theories Used:	Stages of Change Social Cognitive Theory
Important Partners:	Florida Prevention Research Center Kentucky Department for Public Health Local businesses and nonprofit agencies
Decision-Making Process:	Coalition of approximately 40 community members who combined process of social marketing with coalition model (Community-Based Prevention Marketing) Decisions based on: literature, community members' knowledge of community, formative research Coalition members voted on priority areas, with a majority vote winning
Overall Target Audience:	Tweens: Children ages 9–13
Rationale for Target Audience:	Take advantage of the national research conducted by VERB on this age group
Secondary Audience/Influencers:	Parents of tweens
Formative Research:	Focus groups with parents and tweens Focus groups to pre-test intervention ideas Youth advisory board recommendations Nationwide research from the VERB campaign
Audience Segments:	Sixth graders (11–12 year olds) for most activities Tweens (9–13 year olds) for the Summer Scorecard program
Current Behaviors:	Currently not meeting the recommendations for time spent in moderate to vigorous physical activity
Behavior Change Goal:	At least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity per
Barriers/Costs to Behavior Change:⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of embarrassment in front of one's peers • Costs for equipment, uniforms, or team fees • Lack of transportation • Lack of access to safe places to play

⁵ From *2005 Marketing Plan: Lexington Tweens Nutrition and Physical Activity*, available online at: [http://hsc.usf.edu/publichealth/prc/marketing%20plan%20\(3\).pdf](http://hsc.usf.edu/publichealth/prc/marketing%20plan%20(3).pdf)

Benefits/Incentives Offered to Change Behavior:⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend time with friends • Have fun • Master new skills • Spend time with family, separate from friends
Pre-testing:	VERB and local materials pre-tested with tweens and their parents, either in focus groups or during more informal sessions at after-school programs
Evaluation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face interviews conducted at finale event (with participants) and local library (with nonparticipants) • Open-ended survey conducted by telephone (participants) • Demographic information collected from scorecards • Additional YRBS questions for middle school students—ask about familiarity with VERB and behavior changes
Helpful Tools/ Resources Used:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing formative research from VERB • Youth advisory board
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⁶ From 2005 Marketing Plan: Lexington Tweens Nutrition and Physical Activity, available online at: [http://hsc.usf.edu/publichealth/prc/marketing%20plan%20\(3\).pdf](http://hsc.usf.edu/publichealth/prc/marketing%20plan%20(3).pdf)

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